

- *Deal with the strange and the mysterious*
- *Involve symbolic imagination*
- *Turn to the past for subject matter*
- *Struggle between a belief in the perfectibility of humanity by following one's individual conscience and the essentially evil nature of humankind*

Hawthorne

Focuses on the problem of evil and the nature of sin. He is not a moralist, but like a psychologist. He analyzes the inner world of the human mind and heart.

Hawthorne analyzes the effect of one sin on the four main characters who are closely intertwined because of that sin.

Beginning with the wild rosebush growing beside the prison door. Hawthorne suggests that Nature might actually sympathize with those whom society has condemned.

All action occurs in the center of Boston and in the outskirts of this village. There are three scaffold scenes: one in the beginning, one in the middle, and one at the end. In each, the four main characters are present, and the changes in each are shown.

Chapter 1

Hawthorne begins the story with an acknowledgement of the inevitability of sin and death. (reflection about the need for a cemetery and a prison)

“deep heart of nature” (Romantic)

The rosebush, being wild, was “planted” by nature and not by humans. This one bit of beauty juxtaposed with the ugliness of the prison door represents the Romantic notion of a Nature that is sympathetic to human frailty and imperfection.

Chapter 2

Hester Prynne is guilty of adultery

View: the women feel that Hester's punishment is too lenient. Some desire death while others assert that Hester should at least be branded with a hot iron. The women's comments suggest that the society is much more deeply concerned with punishment than with compassion and forgiveness.

Hester is to stand on the scaffold as a "spectacle of guilt and shame" for three hours and to wear a scarlet "A" for the rest of her life.

Hester adorns her "A"

In England (Hester's flashback)